

## Camera collector looks forward to Kent show April 9



CHARLES CORTES, KENT REPORTER

Bob Kelly, a member of the Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society, shows off a custom beaded Argus C3 in his collection of cameras, March 31. Kelly will have a display of Argus light meters for the Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society Camera Sale, Swap and Show at the Kent Commons.

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Take a few minutes to visit with camera collector Bob Kelly and it's easy to understand why a friend refers to him as "The Argus King."

Kelly, who will participate in the 31st annual [Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society](#) sale and show 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 9 at Kent Commons, collects Argus cameras, sales brochures, user guides and other company documents.

In fact, Kelly, 62, of Renton, has so many Argus items that he already has arranged to eventually give his collection to archive at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, the city where Argus cameras were first made.

"It's fun for me," Kelly said as he stood next to bookshelves full of cameras at his home. "I enjoy writing about Argus as well."

The Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society sale and show returns to Kent this year after about 10 years at the Puyallup fairgrounds.

Kelly will display at the show a collection of Argus hand-held, and camera-mounted light meters from 1938 to 1962. He found the items at swap meets, on eBay or friends bring the meters to him.

A former head of employee training at Boeing until he retired five years ago, Kelly always has enjoyed taking pictures and once taught photography classes at Western Washington University in Bellingham.

He started to collect cameras in the 1970s at the former Midway Swap Meet in Kent where the Lowe's store now stands. He initially displayed cameras on the mantle. Then a friend introduced him to the Argus camera and Kelly decided to focus on that one brand.

Now, in addition to belonging to the Des Moines-based Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society, Kelly also is a member of the Argus Collectors Group that meets once a year in North Carolina.

"We get 40 to 50 people there and it's like a mini-seminar," he said.

Kelly knows Argus well. He explained how the company first made portable radios before adding the manufacturing of cameras in 1936 just after the Great Depression. The initial Argus A model sold for \$12.50.

"The cameras were wildly successful when they first came out," Kelly said. "The company sold the radio business and went with cameras because the business did so well."

Argus did well until about the mid-1950s when technology started to improve and Japanese and German companies began to produce cameras. Argus became part of Sylvania and later GTE.

"The name still surfaces today but it's mainly digital cameras from China," Kelly said.

The Argus C3, 35-mm camera became its most famous item.

"It became known as the brick because of its shape and it's heavy," Kelly said as he grabbed one of the C3 cameras off a bookshelf full of cameras, meters and lenses.

For anyone who has never been to the camera show before, Kelly said Kent Commons will fill up with cameras.

"There will be tables full of mostly film cameras," he said. "You will see displays of various types, and some digital. You can also bring in grandpa's old camera to have it appraised by dealers."

Kelly doesn't sell his items at the show. But if anyone wants to know the history of the camera originally from Ann Arbor, they can simply stop by the table of "The Argus King."

If you go

What: Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society sale and show

When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 9

Where: Kent Commons, 525 Fourth Ave. N.

Cost: \$5

Website: [www.pspcs.org](http://www.pspcs.org)

Contact Kent Reporter Courts, government reporter Steve Hunter at [shunter@kentreporter.com](mailto:shunter@kentreporter.com) or 253-872-6600, ext. 5052.